

Recorder Reporter

Newsletter of two chapters of the American Recorder Society (ARS),
Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society

Our 50th Anniversary Year!

March 2009

Volume 50, Number 7

Chicago Chapter News

On Sunday February 15 the members of the Chicago chapter in attendance enjoyed another splendid afternoon of recorder playing, and a good crowd, and an excellent performance by our old friends from the Ridgeway Consort, *and* chocolate cake (Hildé Staniulis' birthday). Maybe that's what we can do to boost attendance at our meetings. Renaissance elegance and gourmet snacks.

But such pandering ought not to be necessary. We are recorder players! We gather for the love of great music! Patrick O'Malley directed the group in a modern work for recorders by German Hans Poser, *Wandsbeker Tanze* (1961), a suite in eight parts for SATB. Then the Ridgeway Consort took the stage, Ben Eisenstein, Elizabeth Sharp, and John Thompson on recorder, later joined by Nancy Eisenstein on keyboard. After several Renaissance Italian works they played all six movements of Benjamin Britten's Alpine Suite (written for recorder) and closed with a work by the Swedish composer and Bach contemporary Johan Helmich Roman (1694-1750), *Trio Sonata in C Minor*.



The Ridgeway Consort

Patrick closed the afternoon directing us in a challenging multi-choir piece by English Renaissance composer Thomas Morley, *Hard by a Crystal Fountain*. Some fine sight reading and camaraderie for Valentine's Day.

We welcome back Gail Gillespie on lute on March 15, and on April 19, a trio featuring Anne Cook, Dennis Sherman, and Nancy van Brundt. Our year ends with our spring concert on May 17.

WSEMS

The February meeting of the West Suburban Early Music Society was led by Nancy Chabala and Jim Heup. We split into two groups for the first part of the meeting to experience the joy of a small number of players on a part. Nancy's group played through a number of pieces in our canon, including a beautiful Byrd arrangement of *Christ Rising*, a modern setting of *Four Sea Songs*, and back to the English Renaissance with Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*. Jim led his group in two settings of *Cantate Domino*. After the break, each group played one of their selections for the other group. The meeting ended with Nancy leading us all in several selections from our Thomas Simpson book. For our next meeting on March 8, we plan to repeat the small group idea, possibly adding a krumhorn only group as well. We hope to see everyone there!—Eric Stern

Plans for 2009-2010

We are almost finished with the "oughts" or "oh's" decade. We already have in common use the term "the turn of the century," but that refers to the time from 1900 to 1910. So we will need to think of another way to talk about the decade we are living in now (how about "the debts"?). Until that happens, the board will concentrate on planning for the chapter's next season.

We plan to continue with our current format, group playing for 90 minutes, a concert 20 to 30 minutes long, a break, and then another hour of group playing. We would also like to continue to develop a measure of consistency from one month to the next, and one way to do that would be to provide a standard body of music to use at each meeting. We are looking at buying a music book for use on Sunday afternoons, a standard collection of recorder sheet music for ensemble playing, costing \$15 to \$20 a copy. Each member and regular participant would be asked to buy a personal copy, and the chapter would buy another six to 12 copies to have on hand to lend to visitors. One example would be *The Recorder Consort*,



in four parts, edited by Steve Rosenberg. Part 1 features over 40 pieces for SATB instruments. A variety of other materials are available; if you would like to suggest something for us to use, contact Dennis Sherman at drsnyj-chicagoarsbook@yahoo.com.

April 2009 Workshop!

You should have your flyer by now for our April 25th event at Concordia University in River Forest. It's time to register. Also, it's almost time for the annual Whitewater Early Music Festival again. This year's event is June 5-7 at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

Please note that scholarship funds are available.

We want you to attend either event; please don't let finances keep you from participating. The Chicago Chapter set up the Harry Kroesen Scholarship and Outreach Fund in 1998 in part "to provide scholarships for beginning or advanced recorder players who plan serious study of the recorder" and "to provide scholarships to cover tuition for ARS or Chicago Chapter sponsored workshops." Contact Mark Dawson at (773) 334-6376 or at msjddawson@sbcglobal.net to learn more.

Instruments Available for Sale

- Moeck "Tuju" tenor maple-single key- good sound all the way, works well, German fingering. \$75
- Heinrich Alto - speaks well full range. Wood - brown - nice sound - \$100
- Moeck Rottenburg Alto - Rosewood - sweet sound - well in tune and speaks easily. Asking \$275
- Zen-On Bass - great shape - hard case - lyric - \$550

Louise Austin (920) 648-8010, weezie706@yahoo.com

Renew your Membership

I'm sure you would rather listen to other tunes, but this is a chorus you are likely to hear a lot in 2009; *We need money, oh, we need money.* At this point the Chicago chapter has 28 paid memberships and about \$800 in our checking account. That puts us in excellent company with many other fine but struggling not-for-profits and cultural institutions in northern Illinois. So if you have not renewed yet, please send us a check. We could really use your support at this point. And an extra contribution to the cause of early music would be welcome too.

You can buy a membership in both the national organization and in your local chapter at the same time.

For the national ARS the dues are \$45 a year; for the Chicago chapter the dues are \$25, and for West Suburban, \$15. Send \$70 for both memberships to Dale Fitschen for the Chicago Chapter (1029 S. Clinton, Oak Park, IL 60304-1823) and \$60 for West Suburban to Nancy Good (741 Willow, Naperville, IL 60540-7421).

*No Woeful Pleas, No Gentle Tease, No "Pretty Please. . ."
Just LAY SOME LOOT ON THE LINE!*

—Recorder Reporter, *Chicago chapter monthly newsletter*,
September 1960

The chapter needed cash 49 years ago, too. In those days individual dues for the year were \$2.50, but to attend the monthly meetings you either needed to present your membership card or pay 50 cents.

Early Music at Interlochen

The Interlochen Center for the Arts is a 1200 acre fine arts camp in northern Michigan that offers a summer arts program in music, dance, theater, film, writing, and visual arts each year for 2500 students from ages 8 to 18. The facility also features a fine arts boarding high school for 500 students, two public radio stations, and a year-round arts program for adults. Founded in 1928, this celebrated arts program today draws students from all 50 states and 40 foreign countries.

This June 7-12 Interlochen offers an Early Music Workshop for adults. "Topics will include articulation, ornamentation, improvisation and ensemble arrangement in medieval and renaissance music. The workshop culminates with a participant performance on period instruments such as recorders and other early winds, viols, lutes, harpsichord and percussion. Vocalists are also welcome." Registration is limited to 18 participants for the program, located near Travers City. Tuition is \$389, not including meals and lodging. To learn more call 231.276.7200 or visit www.interlochen.org and click Adult Arts Programs and 2009 Programs.

On Holding Your Recorder

When looking for the most natural way to position your tongues and fingers on the recorder, attend to how your body parts look and feel when they are at rest *before* you pick up the instrument. For example, hold your instrument in your left hand. Hang your right arm by your side. Wait some seconds to be sure it is hanging naturally. Then momentarily freeze your hand in its natural position and bend the elbow, bringing the right hand to its position over the recorder holes and look at it. See how it feels! Notice where the thumb and fingers are naturally. Your



thumb rest should be attached so the instrument rests on a thumb in its natural position. That avoids unnatural stretching. It will allow the fingers to land on their assigned holes naturally, requiring less tension. We are all built differently. We need to individualize hand and finger placement on the recorder. Is it that simple? Yes. The same applies to the tongue. Feel where your tongue is in your mouth when it is at rest with your mouth closed and lips together. (*Clearly, some of us must suffer from tongue fatigue. Resting is good.*)

Part your lips and teeth slightly, purse your lips gently and blow on your right hand. Repeat this a few times. The higher the tongue position, the cooler the air. Get your tongue at rest again with your mouth closed and lips together. Pull your tongue lower in your mouth, part your lips slightly, purse your lips gently and blow on your right hand. The air is warmer. Warm air will cause more moisture in your instrument than cool air. So, don't do put your tongue anywhere special when you play. Let it be. It rests higher in the mouth naturally.

At a meeting once a player opposed my views. "Everything you do with your fingers and tongue affects sound. How you breathe affects sound. How you support your breath with the diaphragm affects sound. So, how can you simplify such complex realities for a wind musician?"

"Everything we do does affect the sound we produce," I agreed. "However, if you think about the instrument first, it may change how you approach what you do. The only thing the instrument cares about is that air gets sent through the mouthpiece. It doesn't care at all how it gets there. The air will be managed by the instrument, its acoustical structure, its nodes, its material, to produce tone. It doesn't care about your tongue, teeth, fingers, diaphragm, and so on. It's like an organ pipe."

Then I challenged them. "See that movie screen over there? I am going to set it up, stand behind it and play the slow movement of Loeillet's A minor sonata – once as I normally play, using the natural playing techniques I espouse, and once putting the instrument to my nose and blowing. Your task is to decide as a group which performance had the recorder in my mouth and which had the recorder nuzzled up to my nose."

When I finished the group was divided. They argued for about five minutes, defending their opinions with considerable passion. I just watched with considerable glee. Then I said, "Look at you. You can't decide which version was the nose. It is making you crazy. If I tell

you, one group of you will be made wrong, and that isn't the point. One half of you thought it was beautiful enough that it had to be played with the mouth; the nose couldn't do that. And you couldn't agree which was which! Evidently, some of you just applauded my nose. I rest my case about pedagogical truths."—*John Langfeld*

Sunday, April 19, the members of the Chicago Chapter plan to join John at 4 PM at St. Luke's Church (our meetings are held) for a concert, concluding with as many recorder players as John can recruit to perform Dies Irae (seven parts, SSAATTB). For the music, email Mark Dawson at msjddawson@sbcglobal.net or John Langfeld at langfeldjohn@gmail.com or call Mark at (773) 334-6376 to mail you a copy. A reception follows the event.

Historical Reflections of the OPRS

In 1983 I moved from Pittsburg, Kansas, where I had finished my music degree, to Oak Park. During my years in college, I dabbled in early music playing in the school collegium, which was mostly strings, and learning Handel sonatas on the alto recorder. But I never had any formal training. Enter the Oak Park Recorder School.

I was reading the *Oak Leaves* newspaper one day and came across an ad for the School. "Glory be! I can finally get some instruction on this instrument I have fallen in love with!" I called the school immediately and enrolled. This hilarious woman by the name of Louise Austin was teaching the OPRS. Louise was extremely welcoming and I found myself much at ease with the class materials and fellow recorder students. The classes lasted about an hour, and we studied finger technique, tone colors, instrument care, and loads of literature. I never wanted the classes to end and looked forward to the next lesson with much anticipation.

When Louise Austin had to move on, she was replaced with her opposite, Marguerite Clarke, going from over the top funny and exciting to a gentle quietness. Still, the class responded well to Marguerite's prodding to stretch our abilities and always, always use a metronome. We were also treated to Marguerite's skills as an accompanist and loved it when we got her to play the harpsichord.

Bill Nelson followed Marguerite as instructor and from him I found a new appreciation for the "modern" recorder. Extended techniques and 20th century literature were his forte and I grabbed on with both hands. Bill introduced me to Hans Ulrich Staeps, who reminded me of Hindemith, and I had the distinct pleasure of learning and performing his recorder sonata with Bill at the piano. A brilliant piece and I still play it today!



After the class was over we always walked through another group of recorder players assembling in another large room. I am not sure why it took me so long but finally, after about the fifth time, I stopped and asked who, what and why. It was the Oak Park Recorder ensemble and I was welcome to stay and play anytime. This group had been meeting every Tuesday since, well, I think more years than I have been around! At the helm, David Fitzgerald, a man larger than life and who would become a great friend and mentor to me. We would spend the next 20 years or so playing together in various ensembles. I miss him every time I pick up a recorder.

I spent many years in the basement of the Pilgrim Congregational Church learning and playing the recorder. I met so many people along the way that have shaped my life not just musically but personally. The teachers I had over the years shared their talents without question and nurtured all of us to be the best musicians that we could be. Louise Austin, Marguerite Clarke, Bill Nelson, David Fitzgerald, these are the names for the Chicago early music history books because there is not one recorder player in Chicago who has not been touched by at least one if not more of these musical gems. —*Laura Kuhlman*

Tuesday Night Recorder Sessions

The Oak Park Recorder Society offers a fine way to gain regular experience in playing with a group. OPRS members meet Tuesday night, 8 to 10 PM, in the basement of the Pilgrim Congregational Church, 460 Lake Street. Go to the back entrance near the parking lot and ring the buzzer for the basement.

Chapter Information

Our chapters are open to anyone, regardless of musical training, who wants to cultivate and sponsor love and appreciation of the art, history and use of the recorder and related instruments. Our meetings, programs and publications help members to come together and to find others with similar interests.

Chicago Chapter Dues begin September 1, and West Suburban dues cover June 1 through May 31 and are due in September. Both groups include membership in either chapter and in the *American Recorder Society*. Members are listed in the ARS directory, receive *The American Recorder* magazine and this newsletter.

The *Recorder Reporter* newsletter is published monthly from September to May and is the joint effort of the Chicago Chapter and the West Suburban Early Music Society. It is free to chapter members.

Chicago Chapter ARS (chicagoars.org)

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Chicago Chapter meetings: Usually third Sunday of each month, September through May, 2 PM, St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1500 Belmont Avenue, Chicago. Enter at door west of main entrance to sanctuary; and go to Founders Hall in the basement.

West Suburban Early Music Society

Convenor:	Laura Kuhlman (Laura@thekuhlman.com) (630) 462-5427
Vice-Convenor:	Ed Green (edwgreen@aol.com) (630) 983-7251
Secretary:	Eric Stern (egstern1@yahoo.com) (708) 594-9243
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Membership:	Carol Stanger (cvstanger@aol.com) (630) 789-6402
Hospitality:	Nancy Finley (nfelma3@comcast.net)

WSEMS meetings: Second Sunday of each month, September through April, first Sunday of May, 2-4:30 PM at the Naperville Evangelical Covenant Church, 1150 Hobson Road, Naperville, southwest corner of Naper Boulevard and Hobson Road. Exit I-88 at Naper Boulevard and travel south. The church entrance is on a side street, more obvious from Hobson Road. The group also holds meetings in the summer months and offers concerts from time to time.

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